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years existence
the GDR—
years of struggle
social progress,
peace and international
friendship

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Conference of presidents
General secretaries
National societies for friendship
the GDR
December 1978

30 years existence
of the GDR –
30 years of struggle
for social progress,
peace and international
friendship

Conference of presidents
and general secretaries
of national societies for friendship
with the GDR
Berlin, December 1978

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The GDR has the consolidation of world peace at heart

**Speech delivered by Erich Honecker,
General Secretary of the SED Central Committee
and Chairman of the GDR's Council of State**

Ladies and gentlemen,
Friends and comrades,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you, representatives of national friendship societies, as our guests here in Berlin. You have come from all continents to the capital of the German Democratic Republic to discuss your contribution to the key issue of our day—steps towards the further consolidation of peace.

I am certainly right in assuming that you are taking a special interest in the proposals which the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Treaty countries at its recent session in Moscow put before the states and peoples of the world.

The Moscow session shows the realistic way

The results of this meeting, and notably the Declaration issued by it, show what is the most constructive and realistic path in pursuing further progress in the cause of peace and détente, the ending of the arms race and disarmament. Anyone who wants peace and is prepared to do his fair share to ensure it can see for himself that the socialist community is a dependable ally in this endeavour. He can see that the views of our community about this vital issue of world politics are in agreement with what the peoples of the world desire so deeply and demand so vigorously.

Friends,

Our state and our people have the highest regard for the work of the national friendship societies, for their active contribution to the worldwide efforts for cooperation among peoples. In reaffirming in your address to the people of the GDR that you will continue to work for peace and progress with all your might, you are spelling out the decisive conditions for such cooperation to flourish.

Let me tell you that we regard this approach as fully in line with the great responsibilities and growing possibilities with which large sections of public opinion are confronted in championing the cause of peace.

Diverse political forces working in unity

The most aggressive imperialist quarters leave no stone unturned to sow discord among the peoples of the world and to embroil them in strife and conflicts. In contrast, you and the organizations you represent are upholding the banner of international friendship. While these imperialists heap abuse on the socialist countries you disseminate the truth about the policies and achievements of socialism. While these imperialists are fomenting new tensions, raising the spectre of a new world war, you are committed to the expansion of relations on the basis of peaceful coexistence, to a lasting guarantee of peace and to détente. Communists and Liberals, atheists and Christians, people of various political outlooks, are equally pledged to the humanistic aims of peace, progress and international friendship.

It is, therefore, hardly surprising that representatives of all democratic parties and of all sections of the population cooperate in the national friendship societies. Everyone who wants to help build a peaceful world can and must espouse the noble ideal of friendship among the peoples of the world.

Our socialist German Democratic Republic, as is common knowledge, is one of those states which consider it the foremost task of their foreign policy to make an energetic contribution to the consolidation of world

peace, the normalization of international relations and fruitful cooperation among peoples and states. We look upon peace and international friendship as two sides of the same coin. They are closely related to the development of the German Democratic Republic which is celebrating the 30th anniversary of its founding next year.

Reviewing this positive development we can say that the chance offered by the liberation of the peoples previously under the heel of Hitler's fascism, has been seized and used to the best advantage. We have drawn all the lessons from history.

In the heart of Europe, along the dividing line between socialism and imperialism there exists a state of workers and farmers that has extirpated all that is reactionary, and has embraced the cause of progress. There is no basis here whatever for neo-Nazism or chauvinism, for expansionist or aggressive designs. On the contrary, it is very evident that the formation of the German Democratic Republic marked a turning-point in the history of the German people, a turning-point in the history of Europe.

What we have achieved in three decades is the result of strenuous work by our people, of a creativity released and multiplied by the existence of a socialist society. It has been made possible by the fraternal aid given by the Soviet Union, the other countries of the socialist community and, last but not least, the solidarity shown by many friends of the German Democratic Republic throughout the world.

After 8 May 1945 we did a very thorough job clearing out all Nazi and militarist elements from the administration, judiciary, school system and police, indeed from all key positions of public life.

Ever since, not one of Hitler's followers has been able to poison the minds of the younger generation. Not one of Hitler's judges was allowed to assume a post of responsibility in our new state and to disguise himself as a democrat. Not one of the leaders of Hitler's war economy was left in control of the economy. And now, as then, no one in this country is permitted to minimize the crimes of fascism or to foster a neo-Nazi cult.

The constitution of the German Democratic Republic contains the

provision that militarist and revanchist propaganda in whatever form, warmongering, and manifestations of religious, racial and national hatred shall be punishable as crimes. This constitutional principle is being implemented in practice without qualification. Since German fascism and militarism had plunged the nations of the world into an abyss of misery and death, there could only be one conclusion: to destroy it, root and branch. And this is what we have done.

The common cause of the people is the building of socialism

In transforming our country on revolutionary lines we faced enormous difficulties—a legacy of fascism—and much hostility from the forces bent on putting the clock back again. But the antifascist and democratic revolution, and the establishment of a new, socialist order of society, turned out to be successful. It should be reassuring for other peoples to know that the first socialist German state is pledged to peace and staunchly committed to a peaceful future for humankind.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Since the 70s we have been building an advanced socialist society in this country. This is an awesome task calling for a large amount of creative effort. The problems arising in the process of its accomplishment are marked by the fact that this is an evolving society moving in the direction of progress, a society not rent by irreconcilable class interests but one in which all classes and strata are taking part in the common cause of building socialism.

Relying on the political, economic and cultural results we have been able to attain and with which you are familiar—conversant as you are with developments in the German Democratic Republic—we are facing the future with confidence. It is our endeavour to make still better use of the advantages inherent in the socialist system. We are consistently putting into practice our policy of raising the material and cultural

level of the people, by creating all the necessary conditions, and, most important, increasing our economic potential.

Certain quarters in the western world have from the outset looked upon the German Democratic Republic as a challenge. Throughout all these years they have not given up their attempts to put obstacles in our way and to interfere in our internal affairs. But it has all been to no avail. Socialism in this country is growing stronger and stronger. Not only is the German Democratic Republic witnessing a dynamic and steady development for the benefit of the people, it is also recognized on a world scale, playing its full part in international affairs.

Solid basis for cooperation

Thus, it is even better equipped to serve the interests which the national friendship societies, too, see as their own. We hold that, historically speaking, your societies deserve much credit for the efforts they have made out of a profound awareness of their national interest to help lay the safe foundations for friendship among peoples and for fruitful co-operation wherever imperialism is out to sow hostility and discord. In whatever we are doing and planning, our basic consideration is that we must and will succeed in preserving world peace. Peace and security are indispensable if mankind is to live in happiness. And since the happiness and wellbeing of the people are socialism's supreme goal, the socialist countries are to be found in the forefront of the struggle for a peaceful world. Our people want peace for themselves and for all nations of the world. We do not threaten anyone, but offer our hand in friendship, ready to cooperate.

Friends,

I should like to congratulate you warmly on the results of your two days of talks. You have shown your intention to come up with new initiatives to mark the 30th anniversary of the German Democratic Republic. Please rest assured that the Socialist Unity Party of Germany,

the Council of State, the Council of Ministers and the population of the German Democratic Republic will continue to support the work you are performing with such an acute sense of responsibility for the cause of peace and international goodwill.

Please convey our best wishes to your fellow-countrymen and tell them that they can always rely on the GDR as a loyal ally in the struggle for peace, democracy and social advance.

We are linked by the common struggle against imperialism

**Toast proposed by Tullia Romagnoli-Carettoni,
President of the Italy-GDR Friendship Society and
Vice-President of the Senat, Republic of Italy**

In the name of the representatives of the friends of the GDR from all over the world the President of the Italy-GDR Friendship Society and Vice-President of the Italian Senat declared in her toast:

Mr Chairman,

We are representatives of the most different countries and the most differing political forces but we are linked by two things: by the friendship to your country and to your people and by the common resolve to fight against imperialism and for peace.

We represent movements and people who have believed in you for thirty years, who from the very beginning have set great store by the young German anti-fascist, socialist state. Therefore, we should like to celebrate together with you, this anniversary under the present-day conditions of the existence of an efficient state which has overcome tremendous difficulties and has chosen its path along which it is now systematically advancing, a path which is indeed exemplary in many respects.

Let me add that you are a mainstay, that you are a guarantee for all, in the struggle against fascism, with which we, unfortunately, are still confronted in its most different manifestations. The more you gain in strength, the more significant your progress, the more secure the anti-fascists feel.

We will continue to work to increase the knowledge of the GDR in

our countries and that the ranks of your friends will grow. But we do not expect any gratitude for this. We don't just do this because we are your friends but because we are convinced that this will serve the development of democracy in our own countries and that this means a contribution to the great struggle of peoples for détente, disarmament, cooperation and peace.

Please allow me to take advantage of the great honour you do to us by giving this reception, to thank you, Mr Chairman and your people, who you lead with circumspection. The good wishes we extend to you are stronger than our modest voices, expressed as they are in the name of that alliance which, reaching beyond state frontiers and differing political systems, now exists between all those who are striving for more justice in a world of peace.

30 years existence of the GDR—30 years of struggle for social progress, peace and international friendship

**Speech given by Hermann Axen,
Member of the Politbureau and Secretary
of the SED Central Committee**

Mr Chairman,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Friends and comrades,

The manifest purpose of our deliberations is to reach a common viewpoint on the historic significance of the 30 years of German Democratic Republic's existence and, from this angle, to discuss a number of present-day tasks and problems.

The 30 years of the German Democratic Republic's existence is, in historical terms, not a long time. And yet it may be said without exaggeration that it is precisely these three decades in this 20th century, in which the vital issues that have faced the nations of the world from time immemorial—freedom, lasting peace and social advance—have come to a head and are awaiting a solution.

Today, in the last third of this century, the nations of the world are literally confronted with the choice between survival or extinction, between a lasting preservation of peace or a nuclear holocaust. In settling the issue of peace or war, the fact that a socialist, and hence peace-loving, state has now existed and developed on German soil for 30 years is of great consequence. For the peoples of Europe and the world at large have not yet forgotten, and in fact cannot forget, that two destructive world wars originated on German territory in the course of this century.

German monopoly capital, which entered the scene too late when

the world was parcelled up among its rivals, pursued a particularly aggressive and expansionist policy, both under the Kaiser and under the Hitler regime. The end result was that the German Reich which Bismarck had forged in 1871 by fire and sword under the hegemony of reactionary and militarist Prussia, crumbled to ruins and ashes in 1945. The lessons of history and the experience gained in particular by the peoples of Europe made it absolutely necessary for the power of the reactionary forces to be broken on German soil once and for all. Never again was Germany to become the starting point for a new carnage among the people of the world.

The inevitable conclusion to be drawn from two world wars, which had claimed 59 million lives and caused inestimable destruction, and from the struggle of the German labour movement and all other democrats and patriots for peace, democracy and social progress, was the demand that after the defeat of the Nazi regime in 1945 a genuinely new, peace-loving, and democratic German state should be established. It was necessary to provide lasting safeguards—administrative, political, economic, social and cultural—against a revival of the notoriously rapacious German imperialism.

Such a new, peace-loving German state was inconceivable and impossible to erect without smashing the concentration of economic power in the hands of German monopoly capital, without liquidating the strongholds and breeding grounds of German imperialism which were the source of all the money and arms needed for its international military adventures. There could be no doubt whatsoever that the new German state had to be both anti-fascist and anti-imperialist if it was to become a genuine state of peace. This awareness reflected the wishes of all those people who had fought heroically against fascism and the endeavours of the German anti-fascists who had offered persistent and costly resistance to the Hitler regime.

After the Second World War, the guilt and responsibility of German monopoly capital was not disputed by anyone, including all the Allied Powers. It is quite instructive to recall some documents from those days. For example, we can read in the Potsdam Agreement, and I quote: "At

the earliest practicable date, the German economy shall be decentralized for the purpose of eliminating the present excessive concentration of economic power as exemplified in particular by cartels, syndicates, trusts and other monopolistic associations."

Official quarters in the USA also made unequivocal statements to the same effect. A committee of the US Senate noted on 22 June 1945:

1. It is not true that German industrialists became involved in the war only at the last moment and then only under duress. They were ardent advocates of war right from the outset.
2. The support given by German industrialists and financiers enabled the Nazis to seize power.
3. The switch-over to a wartime economy was made possible only by the unreserved cooperation of German industrialists."

The chief American prosecutor declared the following at the Nuremberg Military Tribunal: "It has always been the view of the United States that the leading industrialists of Germany are guilty to the same extent as her politicians, diplomats and soldiers, of the crimes listed in this indictment (that of the International Military Tribunal)."

Thus, it was in response to a deeply felt historical necessity that far-reaching socio-economic and political changes were effected in the east of Germany, providing the foundation on which the German Democratic Republic was established in 1949.

In other words:

So that never again a war will originate from German soil, imperialism and militarism had to be eradicated once and for all. Consequently, the road to a German state of peace led logically to socialism, to a socialist German Democratic Republic.

This change of direction in one part of Germany marks a radical and final departure from all that is reactionary in German history and the consummation of the long struggle waged by the best forces among the German people for a new state pledged to human values and progress.

The German Democratic Republic has emerged from more than 100 years of struggle by the revolutionary German labour movement against capitalist exploitation, oppression and belligerent policies. Its

founding made a reality of the demand raised by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the 1840s, for a democratic German republic living at peace and in friendship with its neighbours.

At the same time, the GDR is proving itself to be a worthy guardian of the progressive legacy of the German people, of the forward-looking ideas of its great humanist men of letters from Goethe and Schiller, Heine and Herder, Kant and Hegel to Heinrich and Thomas Mann, Johannes R. Becher and Bertolt Brecht.

Our German Democratic Republic upholds the traditions of the German Peasant War of 1525, the revolutionary bourgeois democrats of 1848, of the workers, soldiers and sailors of the November 1918 revolution and the anti-fascist resistance against the Hitler regime.

Our first act for peace was to strip those guilty of war and genocide of all their power, and to bring them to justice. During the first five post-war years 12,147 persons were convicted of crimes against humanity by our courts of law.

In the subsequent period, too, all Nazi and war crimes that came to light were punished. We remain true to this principle, because in the socialist German Democratic Republic Nazi and war crimes are not subject to a statute of limitations.

Among all the democratic and revolutionary changes wrought, depriving monopoly capital and militarist landed property owners of their power was certainly the most important and most complicated task. In 1945, any landed property of more than 100 hectares was expropriated without compensation in the democratic land reform, and thus the power of the particularly reactionary, belligerent caste of the Junkers, that is the big landowners, was broken. Finally, the land became the property of those who had always tilled it.

At the instigation of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, the Christian Democratic Union, the Liberal Democratic Party of Germany, and the Confederation of Free German Trade Unions, a plebiscite on the expropriation of war and Nazi criminals and the transfer of their factories to public property was held in the former Land of Saxony. 3.5 million of all citizens entitled to vote, i.e. 93.7 per cent, took part in

it. 77.7 per cent voted in favour of the expropriation. This was a clear victory of the democratic forces, an unequivocal vote for our policy of peace, and a crushing defeat for imperialism and militarism. Other important revolutionary, democratic measures taken during that time such as, for example, the democratic school reform, the creation of an anti-fascist judiciary and state administration, also met with the broad response and active assistance of the people. The motivating force of this whole development was the united party of the working class which was a result of the merger of Communists and Social Democrats into the Socialist Unity Party of Germany in spring 1946. Our party always acted in close comradesly and loyal cooperation with the other anti-fascist and democratic parties and the democratic mass organizations that emerged.

Uncompromisingly, we adhered to the principle that our new state organs had to be controlled and guided by proven anti-fascists and democrats, by willing young workers, farmers and intellectuals.

Notorious falsifiers of history in the west persist in describing the course of this revolutionary and democratic transformation as the work of the Soviet occupying power. These gentlemen spread the myth that everything was done at the order of the Soviet Military Administration. But it is simply ridiculous to assume that every citizen taking part in the above-mentioned plebiscite acted under Soviet orders. A similar absurdity is the idea that those workers and farmers who sat on tens of thousands of land reform committees and parcelled out the estates formerly owned by the big land owners, were forced to do so by the Soviet Union. No! What holds true of the whole world is also applicable to the German Democratic Republic. The socialist revolution was and remains the work proper of the mass of the people. Revolutions can neither be exported nor imported. The successes scored during those and the following years were the result of the intensive political and ideological work, of the persuasion, of the newly founded political parties and mass organizations after the liberation. They were achieved by German anti-fascists from all sections of the population led by the united working class and the SED.

As for the part played by the Soviet Union, we can say that from the very beginning it rendered the German working people every assistance possible in the democratic reconstruction of the country and its advance towards socialism. The presence of Soviet troops on the territory of what is now the GDR protected our great revolution of the people against intervention from outside. The truth is that the Soviet anti-fascists wearing the uniform of the Soviet armed forces proved to be a shield guarding the flourishing of the new social order. This shield was a vital necessity, since the monopolists defeated in 1945 soon restored their economic and political power in the west of Germany with the assistance of the three Western Powers. They sought to strangle our anti-fascist democratic order at birth.

The heroic deeds of the Soviet army in the Second World War and the struggle of all the other nations united in the Allied Coalition freed our people from fascism and gave them the chance of a new beginning. The anti-fascist democratic forces of our people, powerful as they were because of the united revolutionary party of the working class, seized this historical opportunity.

Ladies and gentlemen,
Friends,

Three main periods characterize the development of our country after 1945. During the first period, the decisive factors of which I have just mentioned, the problems of anti-fascist and democratic transformation were solved, and the foundations laid for the construction of socialism. During the second period towards the end of the '50s, these foundations were further fashioned. Decisive sectors of industry and the economy were nationalized and socialist relations of production established step by step.

Upon entering the third period in the early seventies, we began to fulfil the tasks connected with the construction of advanced socialist society in our republic. This we regard as a historical process in the course of which the development of all spheres of life—politics, economy, culture and arts—further continues on a socialist basis. The benefits of

socialism are now taking an ever more concrete shape, and in the process the prerequisites for the gradual transition to communism are being created.

What has been achieved so far in our socialist homeland? One of the most important results of the socialist social system is the rebirth of the humanist traditions of Germany, their creative further development into the noble ideals of socialism, in short, the emergence of a new man, socialist in spirit, character, and way of life.

Material damage caused by the war was not the only thing we had to clear away. We also had to fight a fierce and persistent struggle against the poison of chauvinism, nationalism and racism which had for decades been instilled in the minds of broad sections of the people by an inhuman propaganda.

It is certainly one of our greatest achievements of these 30 years that our people, and especially its up-and-coming generation, have embraced peace, democracy and socialism. Even those who view our development and socialism generally with scepticism or even with hostility cannot but acknowledge the tremendous extent of the changes that have occurred in people's hearts and minds, of their thoughts and actions in the spirit of the good, of humanism, peace and progress.

All too many people throughout the world doubted at the end of the Second World War whether the Germans who had allowed themselves to be ensnared by the Nazis could ever become a peaceful people committed in their entirety to international understanding and friendship among nations. Socialism, the German Democratic Republic, have achieved just this.

With capitalist relations of production replaced by socialist ones and socialist education and morality taking root, the former principle of conflict between classes and strata has given way to one of cooperation. In our country there are the following classes and strata: the socialist working class, the newly formed class of cooperative farmers, the strata of the socialist intelligentsia as well as artisans and small-traders. They are all linked with socialism in socio-economic terms on the basis of public ownership of all major means of production and are

moving closer and closer together on the basis of the world outlook and objectives of the working class.

The working class, which exercises the leading role in socialist society, has proved that it is well-equipped to direct a highly developed socialist state, to master the problems of the technological revolution for the benefit of the people, and to open up new vistas to the people in the realms of science, culture and art. In the continued building of an advanced socialist society the influence of the working class is growing in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

As regards quantitative growth, the proportion of factory and office workers in the total number of employees has risen from year to year, increasing by about half a million since 1970. Almost 90 per cent of the country's working population are factory and office workers.

Even more crucial is the progress made by the working class in qualitative terms, the emergence of a socialist working class. This applies first of all to their Marxist-Leninist maturity and political activity, their expertise and skills in solving economic problems and to their intellectual and cultural development.

As a result of the revolution in education an increasingly large proportion of young workers have completed a ten-year general polytechnical schooling. The unified education system in our republic guarantees a harmonious development for all children from crèche and kindergarten to the 10-year secondary school, and further, to the colleges and universities. Thus, an important move has been made in the GDR towards putting the great ideal of equality in education into effect by providing equal educational opportunities for all children in the country. A pupil attending school in the once backward Mecklenburg for example or in the most out-of-the-way village in our republic, benefits from the same teaching standards as a pupil of the same age in, for example, the capital, Berlin.

Our ten-year school combines the imparting of scientific knowledge and socialist education which are of an internationally acknowledged high standard, with practical work experience and a great measure of physical education. Thus the brilliant vision of the greatest German

thinker, Karl Marx, who wished to see "harmoniously productive work coupled with instruction and gymnastics", as the "only method to produce universally developed human beings", has become reality here.

Our schools provide knowledge in the social sciences and arts, in languages and natural sciences, also giving due attention to polytechnical instruction and physical education at all levels. Whilst in 1950 only 65 per cent of all school-leavers had full vocational qualifications, the figure is now over 99 per cent.

Much the same can be said about the progress made in training and further education schemes for adults. It is safe to say that people's work is increasingly becoming intellectually stimulating, and scientific and technological in character. As we combine the advantages of the socialist system with scientific and technological progress, heavy physical work is gradually being replaced by lighter physical work and mentally stimulating operations connected with preparing, directing and supervising the production process. At the same time, this is paving the way for a systematic improvement in material and cultural working and living conditions.

The socialist GDR is undertaking rationalization schemes. But here rationalization does not add to the profits made by big businessmen, but serves the socialist producers, the collective socialist owners of the means of production. Hence, rationalization directly serves human needs in the GDR, making work easier for the people and raising their standard of living. No one will be thrown out of work or put on short-time. These terms are foreign words in the common language of the GDR's people. Everything is subservient to the interests of the people because they, and no one else, can reap the fruits of their labours.

In the course of the birth and growth of our republic, our farming community has undergone a development that must be nothing short of fascinating for everyone who knows how particularly deeply traditional patterns of thinking are rooted in the countryside.

After the land reform of 1945 individual farmers together with agricultural workers effected, on a voluntary basis, the transition to large-scale

cooperative farming in the course of eight years from 1952 to 1960, in which effort they were backed by the working class and the socialist state. In just under 20 years, the smallholders working the land with their families changed into a new class, that of cooperative farmers. By now they have learned to manage on socialist, collective lines vast economic units several thousand hectares in size, and to apply step by step industrialized methods of crop farming and animal husbandry. This has been the basis for attaining a level of agricultural productivity that has made us virtually self-sufficient in meat, milk, eggs, potatoes and sugar.

All these results have been achieved although the agricultural work force has declined by some 62 per cent since 1950. It goes without saying that the increases in output recorded required the large-scale use of science and technology, the socialist transformation of the relations of production on the land, the constant help on the part of the best allies of the farming community, that is the working class and the socialist state power, the constant improvement of cooperative work through inter-farm cooperation and the establishment of the first agro-industrial complexes.

The socialist revolution in agriculture has in no way been accompanied by the ruin, as it is called under capitalism, or social decline or expropriation of the farming population. On the contrary, it helps to narrow the gap between town and country more and more. Our cooperative farmers take it for granted that there is a safe market for their goods at guaranteed prices. As the agricultural sector is fully integrated into our socialist planning system, fluctuations in the economic fortunes are eliminated. Our farmers know that what they produce fetches a good price. They have statutory working hours and annual paid leave. The new realities of farming life have led to an enormous upswing in education and culture, completely changing the intellectual profile of the rural population, whose life now is hardly different from that of the townspeople.

More than 80 per cent of all those engaged in agriculture have full vocational qualifications, with 70 per cent of all women having ac-

quired a skilled worker's certificate. By 1980, that is by the end of the current Five-Year Plan, the proportion will have risen to 90 per cent.

In response to an appeal launched by the SED in 1953, 31,000 industrial workers went voluntarily to the countryside to help the farmers take their first steps towards a socialist mode of production. Nowadays, entire industries cooperate with modern, socialist large-scale agricultural enterprises, providing practical and vivid proof that the class of cooperative farmers is moving closer and closer to the working class.

Similar processes—similar in principle—characterize the alliance between the working class and the intelligentsia. The intelligentsia is being increasingly recruited from among the ranks of the working class and working farmers, and is playing an active role in shaping an advanced socialist society. Like any other stratum of our people, the socialist intelligentsia of the GDR enjoys material security. Those who belong to it need not worry about their livelihood, but have a certain and bright future before them.

During the further development of advanced socialist society, they are assuming a growing importance as a stratum of society.

During the 30 years of the GDR's existence more than one million students have graduated from institutes of higher and professional education.

The political alliance between all parties and mass organizations which has stood the test in the process of building up the new social order is being purposefully fostered. The trusting cooperation of all parties and social organizations in the National Front of the GDR is a vital condition for furthering the common moral and political outlook of our people.

The National Front of the GDR today can rely on the active and conscious participation of two million communists, the almost 400,000 members of the parties fraternally allied with the SED and many millions of people without party affiliation.

Many Christians, too, share in the work of the National Front. About 5,000 citizens including many priests, theologians, members of synods

and clergymen are members of the 260 "Christian circles" of the National Front.

Loyalty towards the socialist state has long become reality in the activities of religious circles in our republic. From the beginning, Christians have helped to build up this state, contributed to what it has achieved and made use of these achievements. Secondary school education and vocational training as well as a secure job and material security in society—this is available to every adult or young person, irrespective of their world outlook or religious creed. The participation of churches in the struggle for peace has long been a positive tradition in our country. As the socialist constitution of our country emphasizes, in advanced socialist society there is room for everybody, and everybody is needed regardless of their world outlook, social origin or religious creed. Thus the ideals of freedom and democracy have struck firm roots in the minds of our people. Human rights have become a material and political reality in our society.

The fact that in our country power is wielded by workers and farmers and that all large industrial enterprises, educational and research institutions, the mass media, and transport and communications, are public property, results in our understanding of democracy necessarily being different from that prevalent in capitalist countries. Socialist democracy means above all that the working people take part in working, planning and running the state. They exercise real power. The highest organs of power are the people's assemblies which are elected by secret, equal and direct ballot—from local councils to the People's Chamber of the GDR—and which without exception consist of working people most of whom are members of the working class. Since our socialist economy is run on planned lines, working people are in control of the plan, its elaboration and implementation, which is an important way of wielding power. It is precisely upon this the most important sphere of social life, namely material production, that working people under capitalism are not allowed to decide. Through permanent discussion, and implementation and supervision of the plan our socialist democracy makes this vital element of wielding power a first priority.

The broadest possible participation in the decision of all public affairs is one of the most important achievements of our system. This basic right as well as all other political and social rights, including the right to work, to recreation, to education and health protection, material security in old age and in the event of illness or disablement are guaranteed by the socialist state, by the freedoms we have.

All this became possible because in the socialist revolution the people of our republic won the most important of all freedoms, the freedom from exploitation.

An important driving force of our democracy and, indeed, our whole development is the application of criticism and self-criticism. We are in favour of criticizing all that is backward and hinders us from improving the quality and richness of people's lives. We not only criticize manifestations of bureaucratism, lack of feeling and formalism, but punish them as infringements of our socialist democracy. This is a constituent part of our socialist law, and, what is decisive, our socialist practice.

Often western criticisms of our democracy have a very specific aim. Of course, the opponents of the GDR do not want to encourage constructive criticism. They want an opposition against our state, an anti-socialist opposition serving to put in question our state and its new and just social system.

In the GDR an anti-socialist opposition has long had no social or economic foundation and no political mass basis. The socialist mode of production has won through. A capitalist class does not exist any longer. The exploitation of man by man has been abolished, hence all able-bodied people are gainfully employed. The only system which accords with their interests is socialism. This is their freedom for which they have fought hard. There is no way that they would wish for a return to the capitalist system of exploitation and oppression.

In socialism, the freedoms of the working people in the course of the implementation of our central policy and the development of a socialist way of life and socialist democracy are becoming increasingly accessible for the vast majority of our citizens. To guarantee and defend them is the task of our socialist constitution, of the socialist legal system,

of our security and defence forces. Our laws are directed against everything that is intended to drag our country back to capitalism and militarism.

The outstanding works of our socialist national culture and the achievements of our professional artists and the broad movement of amateur artists have been gaining international recognition. Let us just mention the Brecht theatre or the boy's choir of St. Thomas Church, conductors such as Otmar Suitner and Kurt Masur, singers such as Theo Adam or Peter Schreier, and writers such as Anna Seghers and Hermann Kant.

There are many examples of the blossoming intellectual and cultural life of our people. Nine million people were involved in the annual factory festivals last year. 1.5 million are members of amateur art groups.

For our 8th national art exhibition last year there were 15,000 entries in the fields of the fine and applied arts. The exhibition attracted more than one million visitors, who not only came to see the works on display, but also held intense discussions on them. Taking part in these talks were the artists themselves who created the exhibits.

In this country there are thousands of young poets clubs and singing clubs, workers', village and park festivals, recitals by young poets, and many other features of a rich and diverse cultural scene.

Friends!

From an economic viewpoint, there has been a stable and dynamic development in our country thanks to socialist economic planning and the application of the working people freed from exploitation.

The economic starting point of the country after the disastrous Second World War was very poor indeed. The east of Germany had been the scene of the heaviest fighting. All major cities and factories were largely in ruins. Many of our foreign friends will still recall that our cities then were little more than a wasteland of rubble.

What should be remembered, too, is that under capitalism, the economy in former Germany had taken an anarchic development. In

1945 about 80 per cent of the heavy industry, engineering industry and light industry were concentrated in the three western occupational zones. In 1949, the year the German Democratic Republic was founded, we had only one steel plant with an obsolete blast furnace.

Today, the GDR has attained a remarkable economic position internationally. In saying this one should never overlook the fact that in terms of area the GDR ranks 96th among the states of the world and in terms of population 36th. And yet, we have been able to consolidate our place among the ten leading industrial nations of the world in per capita industrial output.

In 1977 the GDR produced in 26 working days as much as it did in a whole year at the time it was founded. National income has risen sevenfold since 1949.

Today every person employed in industry produces 92,000 marks' worth of material values per annum—a 46.5 per cent increase on 1970 and an indicator of a marked rise in labour productivity in our socialist country.

The seventies, which are regarded as the severest years of crisis for the capitalist countries, have become the most successful in the 30 years of our history. This goes both for the economic development of the GDR generally and for the further raising of the standard and quality of life of all citizens.

After the difficult early years in which the working class and all others had to suffer many privations, the success of our economy is now making itself directly felt in people's everyday lives.

Since 1971 we have been implementing the largest ever social welfare programme in our 30 years' history. We can already refer to substantial increases in wages and pensions for 5.6 million people, an extension of maternity leave, generous financial assistance for newly-wed couples, improved welfare services for women and senior citizens and longer paid annual leave for all in employment.

Our governing principle is that the working people should reap the fruits of their labours. The distribution of national income takes place either directly through wages, bonuses and other forms of material

recognition, or—to an ever growing extent—through the social funds set up by the state from the revenue of socialist economy.

The state's social funds which make up the largest share of the national budget are used to ensure material security for the people and to secure further improvements in their material and cultural living conditions. These funds are used to maintain stable consumer prices and prices for services, to keep rents low and expand educational, health and recreational facilities and enhance the cultural scene still further.

The financial and material benefits from these funds work out at a monthly sum of 685 marks for a family of four, i.e. two thirds of the average monthly income of the working population.

The solution of the housing problem—the grim heritage of capitalism—is at the centre of our social welfare programme. At the 8th SED Congress in 1971 we set the task of resolving the housing problem by 1990 as a matter of social concern, in other words to provide all families in the country with suitable accommodation. Of course, we appreciate the remarkable achievements of technology and architecture in housing construction made in capitalist countries. But as Frederick Engels correctly predicted no capitalist regime is capable of solving the housing problem.

Under the plan, about three million dwellings are to be provided through construction and modernization between 1976 and 1990. Up until now, more than one million dwellings have become ready for occupation, with a resultant improvement in housing conditions for more than three million people. We are certain of attaining the ambitious aim of solving the housing problem by 1990 through the initiative of our people. We will then have done away with one of the most distressing legacies inherited from imperialism and two world wars.

The drive and vigour discernible throughout the country stems from the confidence that socialism means well-being and happiness for each and everyone. The strong commitment of the people in town and country to their state is demonstrated in a particularly striking manner

since no day now passes without workers, cooperative farmers, scientists and technicians making new production pledges with the 30th anniversary of the GDR in mind. Here we have renewed evidence that the creativity of the masses is the decisive factor that makes our plans realistic and socialism's success possible.

We are proud of what we have accomplished. It strengthens our conviction that we have chosen the correct path. But, realistic as we are, we do not overlook by any manner of means the difficulties and problems that subsist. We retain our sense of perspective. We continue to be plagued by a number of serious anomalies. We are a developed industrial country, but our raw material base is poor. Problems abound especially in the energy field. Our country is deficient in hard coal, hydroelectricity and oil. The mining of lignite is very difficult and costly, though important. We have a shortage of labour. If we had more manpower we could raise output by 15 to 20 per cent by using our current stock of machinery at a higher level of capacity.

The soil available to our agriculture is mostly sandy and not very fertile. If the GDR can nevertheless point to high yields, it is due to the great efforts and investments put into mechanization, use of chemicals and fertilizers and land improvement, and to the efforts and experience of cooperative farmers and agricultural workers.

The rise in prices on the world market has brought serious economic problems and strains in foreign trade for the GDR which is poorly equipped with raw materials. We are trying to bridge the gap between rising prices on the world market and the increase in production and consumption, through scientific and technological progress, saving in energy, raw materials, and working time, the development of new raw materials, advances in production engineering, improvements in product quality and the strengthening of our export potential. This is easily said, but difficult in practice.

In speaking of our successes we do not want to project the image of a model state without flaws and shortcomings. We know full well that socialism is not something that emerges from nowhere in all its pristine beauty like Pallas Athena who according to legend sprang from the

head of her father Zeus. The GDR has become the stable and dynamic socialist state that it is today, by overcoming immense difficulties and repelling persistent hostile political, economic and military attacks in the course of its history. Unquestionably, the level we have reached today bears witness to the potential and superiority of our new system, to the application of the working people. And yet, what is involved here is a young social organism. There are still many signs redolent of the problems and difficulties inherited from the old exploitative system. Socialism has prevailed definitively and irrevocably in the GDR. This is one of the chief lessons that 39 years of the GDR teaches us. But socialism has to be constantly improved. The material and cultural needs of our citizens are developing very rapidly and diversely. We have learned how to establish the new system, to defend it and make it ever more attractive, and the learning process continues. It requires much knowledge and hard work. This can only be done on a scientific basis and through the strength of the people. And this knowledge, too, must be constantly extended. New requirements make new demands on the scientific management of all social processes. This is a struggle that must be waged with new energy and renewed vigour every day, that is, new energy in solving the new and greater tasks of the advanced socialist society and vigour in the fight against the enemy whose thirst for revenge remains unquenched.

We are at pains to analyse our own experience in a creative manner and creatively apply the experience made by other countries and pave the way for what is new. In doing so, we chiefly rely on the wealth of experience accumulated in 60 years by the USSR, the first country to establish an advanced socialist society and to create the material and technical basis for communism. This store of experience in the building of socialism represents science put to the practical test.

Likewise, we study the experiences, the ideas and suggestions of all friends of our socialist GDR, the advances and achievements made by all progressive people in the world. You will, therefore, find that we are responsive to all observations and suggestions and criticisms about how we can better and more swiftly attain our goals.

Ladies and gentlemen! Friends!

If it is a law of history that a peaceful German state must be a socialist state, we can say that the dialectical reverse is also true, that during these 30 years the GDR as a socialist state has persistently and steadily pursued a policy of peace, international security and friendship among nations.

All classes and strata of society in our country have a deep interest in guaranteeing a stable peace. While creating material security inside the country we are striving to preserve peace by means of our foreign policy. The power of the socialist community is the main pillar on which world peace rests. Its power and its peace policy serve the preservation and strengthening of world peace. In turn, a stable peace enables socialism to fully display its advantages and its superiority. The overriding objective of the GDR's foreign policy is to create international conditions favourable to socialist construction. Hence, with our foreign policy we pursue three main aims, as formulated by Erich Honecker, General Secretary of the SED Central Committee and Chairman of the GDR Council of State, on the 9th SED party congress:

- "We shall continuously strengthen the fraternal alliance with the Soviet Union and the other countries of the socialist community. Our course will be directed towards drawing our socialist nations and states closer together enabling us to better develop and utilize the potentialities inherent in socialism.
- We shall exercise anti-imperialist solidarity with all peoples fighting for their national and social liberation and give active support to the world's progressive and revolutionary forces in the spirit of proletarian internationalism.
- We shall unswervingly work to strengthen peace and security in Europe and in the world. The results of the policy of peaceful co-existence between countries with differing social systems must be expanded and stabilized through the struggle against all its enemies. Political détente must be supplemented by measures toward military détente in line with the vital interests of all peoples."

Without self-satisfaction we can say in December 1978, i. e. on the eve

of our republic's anniversary that in the course of these 30 years, we have in fact achieved favourable international conditions for the building up of socialism in the GDR. The policy of international blockade and isolation of our republic pursued by the imperialist powers for nearly 25 years has totally broken down. The GDR is a country that has gained world-wide recognition, not least through the successful efforts of the friendship societies. Our republic belongs to the most progressive and powerful international social system, namely socialism, and is a member of its international organizations, the Warsaw Treaty Organization and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, which comprises the countries with the most dynamic economic development.

The fact that the first German in space is a GDR citizen and that the GDR is creatively participating in the implementation of the socialist countries' Intercosmos programme shows convincingly what it means for us to be a firm member of the social and state system of socialism.

Because of the anti-facist and anti-imperialist path which the GDR has been consistently following for decades it enjoys the support and friendship of the peoples and above all of the nations which have liberated themselves. The GDR maintains normally and well developing relations with the majority of capitalist states.

During the three decades of its existence, our country has not only persistently developed its foreign policy, but without doubt has made an active and constructive contribution to peaceful coexistence between states with differing social systems.

Not only did the founding in 1949 of the GDR, the first peace-loving German state, mark a turning point in the history of Europe, but 30 years later we are fully justified in objectively stating that the GDR's foreign policy has played an important part in turning from cold war to international détente. Situated in the heart of Europe, at the frontier between two opposing social systems and the dividing line between the two most powerful military alliances of our time, the socialist GDR has proved to be a bastion of peace. The friendship societies which you, ladies and gentlemen, represent, have, by spreading the truth about the GDR's home and foreign policy and promoting the inter-

national recognition of our republic, made a contribution which cannot be overestimated.

How do we see the present-day international situation? What should be done in the interest of peace? The significant declaration issued by the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Treaty countries on 23 November this year gives a clear answer to this.

The most striking feature of the international situation is that world politics are marked by the struggle between two directly opposed tendencies.

One tendency reflects the generally recognized, though somewhat tortuous trend towards the deepening of political détente. This is borne out by the following: Socialism has grown stronger. Its policy of peace is greatly influencing the resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly and by the UN Special Session on Disarmament. The Belgrade meeting frustrated the intentions of those who sought to distort the Final Act of the Helsinki conference. The meeting confirmed that those who want to realize and not just talk about détente must respect and apply the provisions of the Final Act in their entirety and in their logical context. What operates in favour of détente is that, in Europe especially, the territorial status quo and the important treaties that have been concluded, are largely accepted and observed.

The international public campaign against the neutron bomb is lending fresh impetus to the peace movement and is causing NATO country governments to equivocate. The persistent efforts made by the Soviet Union on the diplomatic scene have induced the Carter Administration to continue the talks on arms limitation and disarmament, especially in the field of offensive strategic weapons.

Similarly, détente is creating a favourable climate for the aspirations of peoples towards national and social liberation. This is shown by the people's revolutions in Afghanistan and in Africa. The liberation revolutions in Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen have frustrated imperialist schemes and are taking their first steps towards the consolidation of popular power.

However, as is underlined in the declaration issued by the Warsaw

Treaty countries, the general course of events does not fully conform to the interests of détente in the world arena. Acting against the trend towards détente is a second tendency, by which we mean the dangerous attempts being made by imperialism to step up the arms race, and to practise military and political interference in the internal affairs of newly independent and socialist nations. We only have to think of the intervention in Zaire, the machinations to maintain the racist regimes in southern Africa, the separate moves of Camp David to prevent a comprehensive democratic solution to the Middle East conflict as envisaged in UN resolutions, and the large-scale activities to forge a peace-threatening and aggressive bloc including the USA, China and Japan. The acts of hostility committed by the Peking leaders against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Democratic People's Republic of Laos, their negative attitude towards all basic issues of détente and disarmament and their stepped-up cooperation on arms with a number of NATO powers are far more evidence of a hegemonic policy that endangers world peace rather than a mere dispute between China and the USSR, as is occasionally shortsightedly maintained.

We can see that the people of the world are currently faced with massive attempts by aggressive, imperialist circles to inhibit the process of détente, indeed, to wreck détente altogether.

This found its most striking expression at the Washington NATO Council meeting in May of this year. While the UN Special Session made practical proposals in New York in response to the peoples' pressing for disarmament, the Washington NATO meeting cynically brushed aside the wishes of the peoples, adopting a long-term armaments programme representing an additional 80 billion dollars over the next ten years. The purpose is to escalate the arms race still further in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

So inevitably the most burning question of world politics today is: Where do we go from here? Will we see a normalization of the international climate with international détente being consolidated and made irreversible? Or will there be, instead of peace, a return to the days of the cold war with a dangerous confrontation in all spheres?

In its declaration, the socialist community has called on all peoples and states to embark on the road leading to the safeguarding and further implementation of the principles of peaceful coexistence. Our countries link with this appeal a constructive 8-point programme containing proposals for arms limitation and disarmament, inspired by the ideas of peace and equal security for all, and therefore acceptable to the governments and peoples of all countries.

Together with its fraternal allies the German Democratic Republic is in favour of the following measures being carried out:

- Conclusion of a world treaty on the non-use of force in international relations under which all states renounce the use of threat of force, the use of nuclear weapons being expressly proscribed.
- Implementation of the proposal that all states represented at the Helsinki conference undertake the following obligations: Not to be the first to use nuclear weapons against each other. Not to increase the membership of the Warsaw Treaty Organization and of NATO. To limit military exercises of either side in Europe to 50,000 or 60,000 men. To extend the confidence-building measures agreed upon in the Final Act of the Helsinki conference to the Mediterranean. That this proposal is a matter of immediate urgency can be seen from the fact that this year the biggest military manoeuvres since NATO was founded took place in Western Europe, notably on the territory of the Federal Republic, involving more than 240,000 men.
- In addition, the socialist states propose the following: Measures to increase safeguards for non-nuclear states. Renunciation of the use of nuclear weapons against states which do not want to produce, acquire or deploy nuclear weapons of their own, for which purpose we propose an international convention.

These and a number of other constructive proposals spelled out in the Moscow declaration of the socialist countries constitute a well-balanced coherent programme for arms limitation and disarmament comprising both immediate measures such as the banning of the neutron bomb, and realistic short-term or long-term steps towards military détente.

We are certain that to limit arms and to disarm will involve a pro-

tracted and arduous struggle, but one that is indispensable for the safeguarding of world peace. Those forces in the capitalist countries which look upon the arms race as an inexhaustible source of super profits, as a way out of the crisis and as a means of regaining military superiority are offering bitter resistance. Thus, NATO Secretary-General Joseph Luns said a few days ago at the Assembly of Parliamentarians from NATO countries in Lisbon: Whatever the Warsaw Treaty countries propose, NATO has no intention of renouncing an increase in military spending.

This is the language of arms capital, of the militarists, of the enemies of détente and peaceful coexistence. The military-industrial complex has huge resources at its command to manipulate and misinform the people. It will, therefore, not be enough to wage the battle on the key issue of disarmament or the escalation of the arms race on the diplomatic scene alone. It will not be possible to bring about a decisive change of direction in world politics towards peace, arms limitation and disarmament without the broadest possible mobilization of public opinion, of all peace-loving people throughout the world whatever their world outlook, colour, nationality or religion, without still more effective cooperation among all democratic movements. And it is such change of direction which is high on the agenda in world politics. The socialist countries appeal to all nations on our planet to bring about such a change for the better!

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have deemed it necessary to deal with this crucial issue facing humanity at this meeting of the friendship societies because it is the humanitarian task of these societies to bring the people closer together through mutual contact. They have in this way for years made an extremely valuable contribution to attaining the noble aim of international understanding, a world without war, without warmongering and without international tensions. A new round of the arms race, an exacerbation of the international situation would frustrate these endeavours of the friendship societies.

The German Democratic Republic will do whatever it is called upon to do, to further the cause of peace, disarmament and security both in its foreign policy and in its efforts to promote cooperation among supporters of peace everywhere in the world.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Friends,

The German Democratic Republic will strengthen and expand its relations of friendship and cooperation with the newly independent nations. We continue our active solidarity with the national liberation movements. The GDR will continue to support the legitimate aims of the peoples of South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, the Palestine Liberation Organization, the people of Cyprus and of all anti-fascist and patriotic freedom fighters in Latin America and on all other continents.

We remain unwaveringly committed to our policy of expanding relations of peaceful coexistence with the capitalist countries. Some governments of NATO states are manifestly under pressure from the Federal Republic of Germany. They have not yet drawn all the conclusions resulting from the diplomatic recognition of the GDR and from the Final Act of the Helsinki conference. This is shown by the fact that political relations with the GDR are being built hesitantly and half-heartedly, which is neither in our mutual interests nor in the interests of peace. But we are not deterred. We will quietly and patiently work to expand our relations—political, economic and cultural—with all countries.

This also fully applies to the further normalization of relations between the socialist GDR and the capitalist Federal Republic of Germany. There can only be good progress in relations between the two German states if the FRG strictly adheres to international law, to the principles enshrined in the Basic Relations Treaty concluded between the GDR and the FRG and in the final document of the European security conference in Helsinki: inviolability of frontiers, respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-intervention in internal affairs. Attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of the GDR invariably have

the same effect of placing a strain on relations among states and poisoning the political climate in Europe.

It is true that the European East-West treaties, the Helsinki Final Act and the world-wide recognition of the GDR signify a severe defeat for the policy of revanche practised by aggressive quarters in the FRG towards our socialist state. But we do not overlook the fact that certain influential forces in the Federal Republic have not yet abandoned their revanchist designs. With their hopes of realizing their plans in the short term receding over the last 30 years, they now cherish the illusion of gaining their ends somehow in the longer term. For this reason they refuse to apply the principles of peaceful coexistence embodied in the Helsinki Final Act fully and consistently to relations with the GDR. Rather than speaking of relations based on international law as established by the Basic Treaty these gentlemen continue to waffle about so-called intra-German relations. The bankrupt Hallstein doctrine has been replaced by the demand to keep the German question open. This is designed to maintain the revanchist objective of a "reunification". But, ladies and gentlemen, there is no longer any open German question. This question has long been answered by history. For a long time, there have been two sovereign states on German soil which are independent of each other and which have differing social systems.

There is no force in the whole world which could unite socialism and capitalism. The people of the GDR have freely determined their own socialist way of development. There are not only two German states and two opposing social systems. In the course of 30 years a socialist German nation has emerged in our socialist republic, while the bourgeois German nation has been retained in the Federal Republic of Germany. Through its socialist development the GDR has been increasingly closer integrated in the community of fraternal socialist countries. The only relations that can and must be maintained between the GDR and the FRG are those of peaceful coexistence, similar to those existing between the GDR and other capitalist countries. This serves the interests of peace and the interests of the people in the two German states.

These are the principles governing our foreign policy vis-à-vis the Fed-

eral Republic of Germany. Two days ago an official government protocol was signed concerning the line of demarcation between the GDR and the FRG. For the first time in the history of the two German states their common frontier was precisely laid down and marked out in a way binding under international law. Since in our time many conflicts start with violations of frontiers, the significance of the border agreement concluded between the two German states, that is to say at the interface between socialism and imperialism, after six years of negotiations is evident. The demarcation of this borderline which has been carried out and approved serves peace and détente.

Ladies and gentlemen,
Friends,

Thirty years of the GDR's struggle for social progress, peace and friendship among nations—this is our people's contribution to the great objective of all nations today, as we approach the end of the 20th century, to ensure for the people of all lands a rich and fulfilled life in peace and human dignity. Our paramount objective is socialism, the well-being of the people of the GDR. But we feel equally responsible for the destiny of human civilization, for putting an end to war, exploitation, oppression and want, for safeguarding the ideals of peace and international friendship.

These are aspirations we have in common with all nations, with all men and women of goodwill. It is with this in mind that I should like to express to you, the representatives of friendship societies, our heartfelt gratitude for your great understanding, for your support, for the wealth of initiative and fruitful work you have done in the interests of our common great ideals.

Thank you.

Consistent stance for world peace

Speech by Gerald Götting,
President of the International Friendship League
and deputy Chairman of the GDR Council of State

Ladies and gentlemen,
Friends,

I find it very impressive to listen here to the far-sightedness and initiative being shown by the national societies and movements for friendship with the German Democratic Republic in their preparations for the 30th anniversary of the founding of our state. This is convincing proof of our conviction that the jubilee of the GDR will be an occasion of interest for the friends of social progress and peace of all continents. This makes us very happy and at the same time fills us with gratitude.

Peace among nations, international understanding and friendship are the great objectives that point to the future and unite us, dear friends. The individual political motives, the economic interests or ideological platforms leading different peoples to this point of view, may differ widely. But differences in opinions on individual social and intellectual problems are superseded by the joint resolve to do everything to preserve peace and to make it the natural way of life of peoples.

This is, basically, the reason why in the course of the thirty years' existence of our republic, citizens of different social origin and ideological or religious conviction have found a common basis for their political actions.

This is the very reason why such tremendous achievements have come about that make up the proud record of our country's near 30 years of existence. We who lived to experience and partook in this development

can certify to the fact that the German Democratic Republic is a venture of the entire people, it is the result of the concerted will, concerted planning and concerted action of all social and political forces playing a responsible part in its construction and progress.

When we set out on our path after our country's liberation from fascist rule and the horrors of the Second World War there was an awareness among all democratic people, that if a recurrence of such a disaster is to be prevented in the interests of our people and those of the rest of the world then all those having peace and human well-being at heart must unite in joint action for a democratic reconstruction of the country.

Therefore, two and a half months after the capitulation of Nazi Germany all parties unanimously adopted a decision to form an anti-fascist united front of democratic forces, as all of us knew that it was necessary to join hands in order to solve the task of fundamentally reviving public life in our country. This marked the inception of the Democratic Bloc which since then has united all forces involved in the development of political objectives among our people and directed them towards common aims.

Hence, it was the principles of peace and democracy, the principles of social progress which from the very beginning have served as guidelines for the emergence and growth of a feeling of togetherness among the political forces of our society, principles which comply with the interests of workers and farmers, cultural workers and professional people as well as craftsmen, which comply with the interests of Marxists and Christians and indeed of all humanitarian forces.

The proposal for the formation of a Democratic Bloc was initiated by the revolutionary working-class movement, that is by the Communist Party of Germany. This is one of its incontestable historical merits.

At the same time, the experience of Hitler's rule and its catastrophic consequences, the joint resistance offered by responsible Germans to the Nazi dictatorship had given rise to the awareness among the members of other classes and strata—even extending as far as democratically-minded bourgeois circles, that only through the cohesion of all forces of the people could the emergence of a new, truly democratic

state in Germany be safeguarded, a state on whose territory everything which the best representatives of our nation have been dreaming of and striving for for centuries will come true: peace and progress of our people designed as a contribution to the peace and progress of the whole mankind.

The historical roots of the common resolve which has assured since then and continues to do so, a successful outcome in all matters of domestic and foreign policy, are to be found in the initial stage of our cooperation more than 30 years ago. The anti-fascist democratic objectives, which united us at the beginning, were achieved during the course of the deep-going social changes of the first post-war years by joint action. Since the founding of our republic we have worked together to establish and strengthen a socialist German state. We joined hands to tackle and solve the individual political and economic, social, intellectual and cultural problems which were, to be honest, often very difficult ones.

In retrospect, we can now say that the stability of our state, the growth of its economic and intellectual potential, the social progress benefiting its citizens, its growing international standing as part and parcel of the community of socialist countries, its mounting contribution to peace and security throughout the world, are the fruits of the trustful and comradely cooperation of the political forces in our republic.

Within the framework of the friendly cooperation of all political forces gathered under the tried and tested leadership of the party of the working class, a genuinely creative atmosphere has emerged which is proving itself again and again in the life of our society. In terms of its social character and political quality, this cooperation is much more than a policy of coalition practised between individual parties in non-socialist countries. There, the emergence of political alliances all too often depends on coincidences, on tactical consideration. In our socialist country, however, the cooperation of the political forces is an expression of the great alliance between the working class and all other classes and strata of the working population, an expression of the fundamental harmony of their basic social interests and objectives.

Naturally, this political alliance, this cooperation was not handed to us on a plate. All of us had to learn how to find a common language. On frequent occasions, reaction tried to drive a wedge between our ranks. But at all times the uniting element has proved strongest. Nowadays, nobody is any longer in a position to disrupt this unity.

The alliance of all social forces finds its organized expression in the National Front, the comprehensive socialist movement of the people. Here the parties and mass organizations pool all forces of the people to develop socialist society. In this way, the National Front is working efficiently to support the main trend of our country's development, that is to say to further enhance socialist democracy, in which all citizens have a say and the right to participate in all public matters. This active involvement and share of responsibility which our citizens are prepared to accept are increasingly becoming characteristic of everyday life here. Members of all parties and organizations enjoy the same rights, obligations and respect in the process. Our socialist state guarantees all citizens the basic political freedoms and social rights, from the right to work, the right to education, recreation, and protection of one's health, right through to economic security in old age, or in the case of illness or disablement, that is to say, fundamental human rights for which, as is a well known fact, fierce struggles are still going on in many non-socialist countries. Socialism is based on equal rights for citizens, irrespective of their race or nationality, their ideological outlook, religious conviction or social status.

People here have come to know that socialism has a place for everyone, it needs everyone and is to the advantage of everyone. Since the members of all classes and strata have first-hand experience of these basic truths they feel committed to socialism and help to fashion it. Such participation and shared responsibility has made our country the place for community work, the socialist homeland for Marxists, Christians and anyone of a humanitarian conviction, and jointly they are undertaking to build up, shape, and defend this homeland.

This shared responsibility for the human being and his future is also the basis on which a relationship of growing trust has developed be-

tween the State and the Church in the German Democratic Republic over the course of the years. More and more holders of religious office have become aware of the fact that the work for peace and socialism is offering the Churches vast opportunities for fruitful activities at present and in the future. These Church leaders see for themselves how the members of their parish are actively engaged in building an advanced socialist society.

Our policy which is devoted to peace and progress, and our economic and social policies serving the well-being of all citizens are a great humanitarian achievement with which the Churches can also concur. Hence, the understanding that our society is preparing the best possible ground for the Christian's service to his fellow man and to peace is gaining increasing acceptance in religious circles. Naturally, the co-existence of people with differing world outlooks and persuasions is a process which must continuously be made a living reality. This is the reason why all social forces are interested in creating a sound and business-like, trustful and frank climate in the relationship between the State and the Church at all levels.

Erich Honecker, the General Secretary of the SED Central Committee and Chairman of the GDR's Council of State, expressed his satisfaction, in a constructive talk held on 6 March this year with the governing body of the Conference of Evangelical Churches in the GDR, at the Churches' stand for the preservation of peace, for détente and international understanding, with their humanitarian aid for people in distress or fighting for their liberation, and for the charitable work of the Churches which fully accords with the fundamental aim of socialism, to do everything for the well-being of the human being. At the same time Erich Honecker emphasized: "We are acting on the premise that all citizens are contributing to the cause of socialism, as it lies in the interests both of society and the individual."

Ladies and gentlemen, this common basic interest of all people in our country at present prompts the working population from all classes and strata to share in the preparations for the 30th anniversary of the founding of our republic. Their participation in the emulation drive to

mark the anniversary of our state is convincing proof of their overall awareness that this republic is the embodiment of their joint will and endeavours, it is their joint achievement. Together, they have achieved something they can be proud of, and together they will further fashion advanced socialist society thus making their contribution to lasting peace.

Working consistently for peace in the world, for the freedom and independence of peoples, for a halt to the arms race, for disarmament, and for international détente—these are the declared objectives of our state's policy. Friendship among nations is strengthening peace. This, ladies and gentlemen, is the idea uniting us. I am certain that our exchange of experience will serve to expand and strengthen the basis of our friendly and trustful cooperation.

The Moscow Declaration of the member-states of the Warsaw Treaty underlines the preparedness of the Communist and Workers' Parties represented there, to enter into a constructive dialogue with Socialists and Social Democrats, with Christian Democrats, religious personalities and organizations, with all social movements advocating an end to the arms race, the elimination of the danger of war, the strengthening and deepening of international détente. May our meeting contribute in this spirit to further strengthen our friendship, so that peace may become a permanent reality.

Increasing role of public opinion in the struggle for peace and friendship between nations

**Closing address delivered by Horst Brasch,
General Secretary of the International Friendship League
of the GDR**

Ladies and gentlemen,
Friends,

We have come to the end of two days of exchanging views and comparing notes in what is a place full of historical associations. It was here in the hall in which we are assembled that a constitution adopted by popular consent was promulgated in October 1949. It was here that the first President of the German Democratic Republic, the working-class leader Wilhelm Pieck, was elected.

48 personalities from 47 countries have taken the floor during the discussion, men and women holding different political positions, world outlooks and religious beliefs, coming from all walks of life and working for peace and international friendship under conditions varying from country to country. Speaking on behalf of the representatives of the parties and mass organizations of the German Democratic Republic present here today, and of the presidents of the friendship societies and committees united in the International Friendship League I should like to make the following points:

The exchange of views we have been holding for the last two days has been *constructive, informative and encouraging*.

It has been *constructive* because we have jointly discussed the present role and stance of public opinion and the new tasks to be fulfilled in order to add weight to our motto "Friendship among nations strengthens peace" under present-day international conditions. The

movement for friendship with the GDR is making a specific contribution to the continuation of détente, disarmament and peaceful coexistence, to greater trust and friendship among the peoples of the world.

Our conference has been *informative* because we have learned about many new and interesting examples of your work in all continents. It is common knowledge that in their activities the friends of the GDR in their particular country are guided by the interests of the peace-loving forces among their own people. Also important are the prevailing political, economic and social situation, particular motives and aims varying from country to country, as well as historical experiences and cultural traditions. Every national movement or society that has set itself the task of developing and promoting friendship with our country and our people takes all this fully into account.

Whatever these differences, the wealth and diversity of the ideas put forward during the discussion represent a rich store of experience which can give fresh momentum to the friendship movement in general.

I should like to assure you dear friends, that this exchange of experiences has put the International Friendship League of the GDR in a position to gain an even better understanding of the work performed by many societies and to make the cooperation with them even more meaningful and also, in many cases, more effective.

The conference will certainly also have been a source of inspiration for many of you.

Another reason why our exchange of views has been informative is that it has illustrated the wide scope of the struggle for peace and social progress being carried on at the national level in many countries.

The statements we have heard from our guests about vital issues affecting their nations will prompt us to step up our solidarity with all peoples fighting for liberation from colonialism, racism and oppression, against neo-colonialism and for their independence and social advance.

Our exchange of views has been *encouraging* because this year, as in 1977, we have been able to welcome and meet representatives of the movement for friendship with the GDR from countries with whom the International Friendship League has not so far established relations.

For the first time we have amongst us personalities from Libya, Madagascar, the Philippines, Costa Rica, Spain, Ireland and Mauritius as well as friends from the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Also, we have learned that the national societies have succeeded in enlisting the support of people from various political parties, social and cultural organizations, scientists, artists and journalists. New groups or committees cultivating friendship with the GDR have been set up in regions and cities of many countries. The prestige and popular appeal of the friends of the GDR have continued to increase over the last 18 months.

Yet another reason why our meeting has been encouraging is that its keynote was the striving for mutual aid and support. The high regard you have expressed, dear friends, for our accomplishments and for our policy of peace fills us with great joy and will be an inspiration for all citizens of the German Democratic Republic in forging further ahead along their tried and tested path.

Ladies and gentlemen,

At the end of our exchange of views I should like to raise a number of especially important questions involved in our work.

Not infrequently, the successful development of the German Democratic Republic—past and present—is seen as a process involving little conflict. Occasionally, there is mention only of the results of our development, but not of the circumstances in which they were achieved.

Comrade Hermann Axen described the difficult struggles our people had to go through and the strenuous work they had to put in before they were able to reap the first fruits of their labours, their dedication and their privations.

Nor has he failed to spell out the complicated tasks that lie ahead for the working people of the German Democratic Republic in their efforts to accomplish the aims that have been set.

At all stages—and this is still so today—we have had to defend every step forward against all manner of attacks from reactionary forces. It must never be forgotten or ignored that for thirty years the enemies of

the German Democratic Republic of whatever hue have tried to reverse the radically new trend initiated with the founding of our socialist state.

Even now certain forces are seeking to put pressure on third parties to the detriment of the German Democratic Republic. Attempts to interfere in our internal affairs, border provocations, the misuse of transit routes crossing our country and activities conducted in West Berlin in violation of international law tend to repeatedly foment tensions.

Whenever we have meetings with people on fact-finding tours of our country, the political attitudes and sense of commitment shown by the overwhelming majority of our citizens is one of the talking-points. For all the differences that exist in terms of world outlook, religious belief, occupation or upbringing, it is true to say of the working people in this country generally that in the course of three decades they have established a socialist state, a dynamic economy developing on planned lines, material security and high educational and cultural standards. New patterns of thinking and behaviour have emerged in this process. One feature is, as has been frequently stressed here, that the overwhelming majority of our people preserve and live up to the legacy of the anti-fascist struggle. A person's record at work counts for much in this country. A striving for a high level of education and the development of the human personality serves both the individual and the community. No one may exploit this endeavour in a way inimical to the people. On the contrary, inventiveness and initiative in the economy, in science, culture and public affairs are in great demand and bring ample reward. A sense of responsibility, drive and enterprise are qualities that are being systematically promoted.

All of us know, of course, from our own experience that attitudes and patterns of behaviour do not arise spontaneously nor can they be maintained indefinitely without effort.

We have gathered from several contributions to the discussion that it is often a very arduous job to correct, by spreading the truth and helping to build confidence, distorted views and to break down prejudices that are a result of anti-Socialist and anti-Soviet propaganda in general and slander against the German Democratic Republic in particular.

In this country, too, attitudes and patterns of thinking do not come about spontaneously.

I should like to tell you in some detail what has been done and is being done to promote friendship among nations, anti-imperialist solidarity and a determined struggle for peace. It has been and remains necessary to work unflinchingly to develop an understanding of the history, present and future of other peoples, of their traditions and cultures, of their struggle for peace, national independence, democracy and progress.

The party of the working class and all other forces united in the National Front of the German Democratic Republic devote much attention to promoting the idea of internationalism. Let me mention only a few of the factors that have helped to make sure that international friendship, anti-imperialist solidarity and an active commitment to the cause of peace are and remain matters very close to the hearts of people in this country.

Much of the credit goes to educational and cultural institutions, the organizations of the working class, of children, women and young people, to authors, artists and journalists. You know that many classical and contemporary works by foreign authors are published and produced in this country, that we show films from all over the world and welcome visiting artists from all continents.

The portrayal of the life of other peoples in novels, travelogues and exhibitions, with writers, journalists, artists and photographers of the GDR all playing their part, is leaving a lasting impression on the general public. Our choral societies cultivate the musical heritage of other peoples, often performing them in the original language.

International friendship is being strengthened by the work of the 11 solidarity brigades of the Free German Youth and many specialists. International children's, youth and student camps, now a well-established tradition in the GDR, provide a wealth of impressions as do trips undertaken by young tourists from the GDR to almost all countries of Europe.

The fact that 7,000 students from 100 countries live among us, main-

taining friendly relations with citizens of our country, is having a positive effect.

Mutual goodwill is also furthered by numerous contacts between parties and mass organizations of our country and their partners throughout the world. Although there are only 219 towns with a population of 10,000 and over in the GDR, they have twinning arrangements with towns in all socialist countries and with 267 towns or regions in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Great-Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Austria, Portugal, Sweden, Iraq, Syria, Mali, Congo, India, and Japan.

We feel, as you will certainly understand, that with 500 twinning arrangements we have attained a level which for the sake of quality should not be substantially exceeded.

The population of our country takes an active interest in international affairs. Tens of thousands of events, meetings, festive functions and rallies organized by the National Front of the GDR and the social forces united in it, by the Committee of Antifascist Resistance Fighters, the Solidarity Committee and the Peace Council of the GDR, not forgetting, of course, the International Friendship League, are an expression of our people's active involvement in all international developments.

The task of the URANIA society is to disseminate knowledge in the field of the natural and social sciences. During the last 18 months this organization has sponsored 13,000 lectures devoted to the life of the people in capitalist countries and emergent nations, to the struggle of the liberation movements in southern Africa and the Middle East. Of these, 6,500 dealt with the capitalist countries of Europe, 2,200 with the Arab countries, 2,100 with Africa, 1,000 with countries in the Americas and 700 with India.

More than 550,000 people from all walks of life and age groups attended these lectures which were held in factories and offices, in urban neighbourhoods and rural communities.

Another remarkable feature is that especially since our last meeting in the summer of 1977 it has become increasingly frequent for members of the study delegations you send to us to give talks to the people.

They report about the life in their own countries, the work of the friendship societies and our common interests. Since these delegations deal both with our overall development and with individual facets of life it is only natural for them to meet with partners representing various sections of the population.

Those who want to acquaint themselves with the development of socialist democracy address and talk to workers in factories, trade union leaders, members of local assemblies and councils. Others profess an interest in the GDR's agricultural development, for which purpose they compare notes and exchange information with our cooperative farmers. A considerable number also want to learn more about leisure pursuits in the GDR. They meet with writers and artists and with all those engaged in amateur activities—whole families, factory and office workers, cooperative farmers, teachers, doctors and many others. Yet another section gets in touch with children, young people and teachers to gather information about our education system. Last but not least, I should like to mention that over the last two years several delegations from Italy, Portugal, France and Great-Britain have come to see for themselves how Christians live in this country, playing an active part in shaping an advanced socialist society. This, too, provides an opportunity to meet with citizens of our country and to exchange information.

The League and its partners abroad have begun to organize colloquies devoted to subjects of mutual interest. We are very much in favour of this because it not only helps to publicize the German Democratic Republic but also involves a dialogue with an exchange of experience. Also, such events tend to prompt highly interesting publications in many countries.

Friendship and trust will develop still better if they are based on mutual understanding. This factor should be given still more prominence in our future work. Therefore, we would like to see the GDR given publicity of the same variety and scope, especially in the capitalist countries of the world, as other countries are in the GDR.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I should like to draw some conclusions for our future cooperation from the intense exchange of experience we have conducted.

Firstly:

The conference has furnished renewed proof that the movement for friendship with the German Democratic Republic is anti-imperialist in character.

It was born in capitalist countries and emergent nations during the campaign for diplomatic recognition of our country. Its successful contribution to this objective has been conducive to security and cooperation in Europe and to détente throughout the world.

Since 1973 the friends of our country everywhere have pursued goals that are different but no less important. In this context, I should like to recall the statement made by the Presidium of the International Friendship League calling for a ban on the neutron bomb. Many letters and comments have reached us from friends of our country and from twin cities all over the world. They reflect our joint view on the matter: The manufacture of the neutron bomb would be inhuman as it would escalate the arms race and poison the international atmosphere; it must therefore be prevented.

During the discussion it has been pointed out that in February 1979 the capital of the GDR will play host to a meeting of the World Peace Council. We are confident that this meeting will lend fresh momentum to mankind's battle to end the arms race, remove the threat of war and to consolidate and deepen international détente.

We know that some friendship societies are also planning to assess the results of the World Peace Council meeting to be held in Berlin. This will also afford an opportunity to make your fellow countrymen better acquainted with the Moscow Declaration of the Warsaw Treaty countries. Since this declaration is not known to many among you and we can offer only the German language version at the moment, we will be sending you copies in other languages as soon as possible.

The 8th Congress of the France-GDR Society expressed the view that relations between France and the GDR should be expanded and placed on a higher level. This is in the interests of the people in both countries and will serve to deepen the process of détente.

It is a concern of the friendship movement to publicize the achievements of the German Democratic Republic in the political, economic, cultural and social fields. Notwithstanding many hostile attacks against the GDR and also against its friends abroad we have accomplished a lot together. As has been stressed during the discussion we will be still more successful if we are even more forceful in rejecting malicious slander designed to sow discord between the people of our respective countries.

Secondly:

The role of public opinion in the campaign for peace and international friendship is growing in importance. Hence it is good policy and, indeed, a matter of great significance if the movement for friendship with the GDR succeeds in drawing still wider sections of the political, scientific and cultural community into its activities.

The events staged to mark the 30th anniversary of the founding of the German Democratic Republic should prove a good occasion to enlist the cooperation of more personalities and organizations pledged to international goodwill, the ending of the arms race and the elimination of the danger of war.

It has been reported here that in Finland distinguished politicians from all democratic parties headed by the President of the Chamber, Akti Pekkala, a member of the Centre Party, as well as scientists, artists, businessmen and representatives of many organizations have been approached so that they may serve on an honorary committee formed to preside over activities connected with the 30th anniversary. As has emerged from the discussion, similar intentions are being pursued in other countries. Such bodies are of great importance. They bring together eminent personalities committed to friendship with our people. This is conducive to understanding and closer cooperation in many

areas. At the same time, it adds to the prestige and appeal of the movement for friendship with the German Democratic Republic.

Thirdly:

To attain its ends, the movement for friendship with the GDR is developing new methods helping in other ways to arouse an interest in its objectives.

GDR Weeks are scheduled to take place next year in many countries on all continents. In many places they have proved to be of great popular appeal in recent years. Cultural programmes, lectures and exhibitions, films and theatre performances, concerts and sports competitions all help to make your fellow countrymen acquainted with the GDR. It goes without saying that *joie de vivre*, entertainment and humour should be given due prominence, too.

We have been greatly impressed by the way scholars and artists in India, Italy and elsewhere have paid tribute to Bertolt Brecht, often providing the first opportunity for many thousands of their compatriots to get to know this revolutionary poet and playwright, and by the mass races of young athletes held recently during the GDR Friendship Week in Genoa and in Australia to publicize our common concern.

The discussion has shown that many other positive initiatives are under way. One project is to address an appeal to the people of Mexico and to launch a press campaign on the GDR in that country. Competitions for children with prizes for the best essays and drawings entered are scheduled in Sri Lanka and other countries.

Preparations for important events in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, the People's Republic of the Congo, Mozambique and Socialist Ethiopia have been reported during the discussion. It is impossible to summarize here the wealth of ideas put forward over the last two days in connection with the forthcoming anniversary of our Republic.

However, we all agree that the 30th anniversary of the GDR will not be just an occasion to celebrate. What we all have in mind is to take advantage of this event to further the cause of peace, disarmament and

international friendship and to rally new supporters to our side. We are confident that the year 1979 will mark the starting point for a new growth of the movement for friendship with the GDR in both qualitative and quantitative terms.

Taking into account your wishes, but also the limited possibilities of our relatively small country, we will, of course, make available artists, scientists and sportsmen to be present at events, and supply you with material for exhibitions, films and publications. We should like to make detailed bilateral arrangements for 1979 before you leave for home.

It has been shown that what counts more than anything else is the involvement of your own fellow countrymen, whether on a large or small scale. We have, therefore, complied with a request from our friends in the Liaison Conference of the Japan-GDR Friendship Society who have produced two films on our country with their own resources and staff. We are grateful to Professor Kojima for having presented us with a copy of the first film as a gift. It is safe to say that friends of the GDR throughout the world will increase their activities to publicize our country. In a small exhibition on display in the entrance hall of this building we have assembled books, brochures, bulletins, posters and articles written for newspapers and periodicals you have published, produced or initiated in 1978 and which you have sent to us. The survey is certainly far from exhaustive.

In addition, we have been informed that members of fact-finding delegations who visited our country have supplied national radio and television stations with reports and comments. The personalities you have sent to us at our invitation on various occasions have, after their return home, reported about our way of life, our activities and intentions during talks in their families, at their place of work, in schools and universities, at meetings and gatherings of all kinds.

I am certain that this aspect of our work, too, will see further progress as we prepare for the 30th anniversary of our Republic's founding. We will do all we can to help your friends arrange programmes and will supply whatever material we have.

The many-sided activities of the GDR's friends abroad and our own

endeavours to make our people acquainted with the countries you come from are helping people in the world at large to get to know each other better, to show mutual respect and confidence and, ultimately, to establish ties of friendship.

Friends, we feel that there can no finer conclusion to our deliberations in Berlin than the reception which Comrade Erich Honecker, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany and Chairman of the Council of State of the German Democratic Republic, will be giving in your honour on 4 December. We look upon this as a tribute to your immense contribution to the noble cause of international friendship and as an outstanding event in the history of the friendship movement. It will—of this we are certain—add further to the prestige and appeal of the movement for friendship with the GDR.

During your visit to the county of Karl-Marx-Stadt, a working-class district rich in tradition, many of you will use that opportunity to talk to workers, engineers, scientists, teachers, doctors, professors and cultural workers. We hope very much that this week you will be spending in our country will be instructive and will enable you to sense the high regard which our people have for you personally and for all those on whose behalf you have come here.

May I use this opportunity to extend to you, your families and friends best wishes for your good health and for many more years of successful activity.

Address of the conference of national friendship societies to the people of the GDR

The foreign representatives of the two-day conference of the national friendship societies held in Berlin approved an address to the people of the GDR as proposed by the President of the Great Britain—GDR Friendship Society, the Labour MP James Lamond. This address reads in part:

Address of the conference of national friendship societies

This international conference expresses warm greetings and friendship to the people of the GDR on the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the establishment of their Democratic Republic.

The delegates congratulate the citizens of the GDR on their great achievements in many fields during these thirty years.

There is a special responsibility, which falls on the shoulders of the German people, to stamp out fascism on their own soil, and to prevent its growth anywhere in the world. This responsibility has been fully accepted by the people of the GDR and their strong stand against fascism has shown the world that the GDR will never be the breeding-ground of the evil Nazi creed.

In all our countries we are determined to strengthen the bonds of friendship with the GDR on the broadest possible basis. We shall publicise the truth about the GDR and thus counteract any anti-GDR propaganda, confident that in so doing we shall be acting in the interests of the citizens of our own countries and of the world.

We, the representatives of many people in many lands, salute the tremendous work of the people of the GDR in all fields of human progress and pledge ourselves to work with you to build peace and friendship between all nations.

A conference of presidents
and general secretaries of national
societies for friendship with the GDR
from 50 countries
in all parts of the world,
and representatives of the Palestine
Liberation Organization (PLO),
was held in Berlin in December 1978
under the motto
"30 years existence of the GDR—
30 years of struggle
for social progress, peace and
international friendship".
The conference of the International
Friendship League
which was opened by its President,
Gerald Götting, was attended
by Hermann Axen and Albert Norden,
members of the Politbureau
of the SED Central Committee.

**30 years existence
of the GDR —
30 years of struggle
for social progress,
peace and international
friendship**

Conference of presidents
and general secretaries
of national societies for friendship
with the GDR
Berlin, December 1978